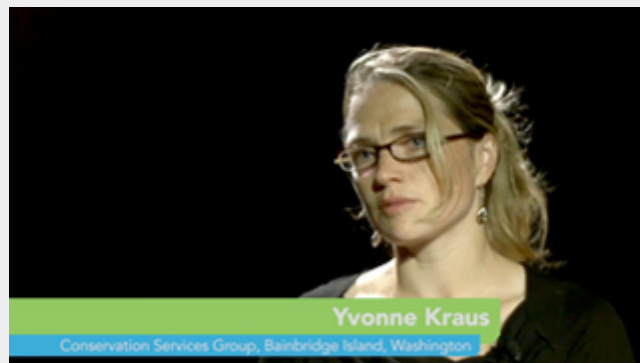


Establish collaborative partnerships with contractors and communicate with them early and often

Contractors are more likely to serve as program champions when the program engages with them throughout program design, delivery, and improvement. Your contractors are the primary contact points with your customers, and the quality of their interactions and services strongly influences how customers view your program. Many Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners found that gathering contractor input during the program's planning phase helped ensure that the program would create value for contractors as well as for customers. The programs built personal relationships with contractors by demonstrating interest in their business concerns and needs. Indeed, an [evaluation](#) [1] of over 140 programs across the United States found that programs were more successful when they fostered relationships with their contractors and communicated frequently with them.

[In Their Own Words: Engage with Contractors From Day One](#) [2]



Source: [In Their Own Words: Engage with Contractors From Day One](#) [2], U.S. Department of Energy, 2012.

By communicating regularly (e.g., via a monthly breakfast meeting, other outreach events) with a core group of contractors, programs were able to better monitor program implementation and receive suggestions for improvement. These programs elicited feedback from contractors about how customers perceived program offerings, as well as input about what was working and what was not for both contractors and customers. Some programs surveyed contractors to collect a regular stream of information about how program implementation was going and to get feedback before rolling out new offers or program design changes.

- [NeighborWorks of Western Vermont](#) [3] maintained steady lines of communication with its network of contractors to help ensure that barriers to getting work done in a timely manner were identified early and that solutions were collaborative. The program held monthly one-on-one meetings with each contractor to review client status and progress and to identify any problems and potential training opportunities. The program also organized bimonthly group contractors meetings focused specifically on sharing new techniques or products. NeighborWorks used regular contractor communications, performance feedback, and contractor incentives and competitions to help contractors improve their assessment-to-upgrade conversion rates. By engaging contractors and including them from the start on any proposed program revisions or promotions, NeighborWorks was able to improve program delivery.
- [Enhabit](#) [4], formerly Clean Energy Works Oregon, program is charged with saving energy and supporting clean economic growth. Much of its success has come from engaging contractors in a continual learning and improvement process. Enhabit solicits feedback from contractors at meetings every two weeks and uses this feedback to guide improvements. With support from the Energy Trust of Oregon, a few contractors collaborated to create the [Home Performance Contractors Guild of Oregon](#) [5], which enables contractors to organize their opinions into a unified voice and have a more formal role in program and regional policy discussions. When Enhabit engaged a new financing partner, the program asked the Guild to examine the loan product and approval process. Input from the Guild helped ensure that the product was something that contractors would be able to explain and promote to customers.

- In Washington State, the [Repower Kitsap](#) [6] program started in a region where the home improvement market was fragmented and under-developed. Contractors were initially wary of one another, tended to work only in their specialty, and often did not have working relationships with one another. The program established monthly brown bag meetings to discuss program goals and requirements and to gather contractor input on the program. The monthly meetings helped contractors get to know and trust one another and develop productive working relationships. Many contractors even shared leads with other contractors who specialized in the types of projects they could not or did not want to handle.
- The [Long Island Green Homes](#) [7] program began consulting with contractors during program design and continued to do so as the program launched and began full service operations. The program established contact with a core group of contractors it trusted, meeting with them regularly to review program status and direction. In particular, the program made it a priority to engage with contractors when rolling out program changes, asking them about their needs, concerns, and current state of business. In this way, the program ensured that program offerings were adding value for the home performance industry and that program requirements were manageable for contractors. For more information on the Long Island Green Homes' launch and other pilot programs, visit the [October 2011 Better Buildings Residential Network Peer Exchange Call Summary](#) [8].

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Source URL: <https://rpsec.energy.gov/tips-for-success/establish-collaborative-partnerships-contractors-and-communicate-them-early-and>

Links

- [1] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/accomplishments#reports>
- [2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXB1v-b_FuQ&feature=youtu.be
- [3] <http://heatsquad.org/>
- [4] <https://enhabit.org/>
- [5] <http://www.oregonhpcg.org/>
- [6] <http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/washington-sep>
- [7] <http://ligreenhomes.com/>
- [8] http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2015/04/f21/100611_Workforce_summary.pdf